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## SCULPTURE.

A LONG step between the mercantile, French bronzes of meretricious finesse to a Tanagra figurine. A far way from the London Thames Embankment, with its pilloried images of notabilities in metal frockcoats and trousers, as if strutting about in priggish manner, or from the Central Park Mall to Athens' Acropolis. It were well had the old Theban law never been abrogated, which subjected artists to a fine and punishment if they represented objects less beautiful than they were in reality. Much that is innocuous, ponderous and clumsy would have been spared to suffering posterity.

The oldest, the grandest of all, the glyptic art, is least understood, encouraged with the least intelligence, practiced to its fulness of glorious imitation by the fewest masters.

Least understood, it is amusing oft to see the divergence of opinions prevailing. A notable instance is found in the writings of two of the most eminent sculpture critics of England anent the Florence Nightingale Monument, by Roubiliac, in Westminster Abbey, where the husband endeavors to arrest the approach of Death, represented by a human skeleton, and while he supports his fainting wife on one arm, he extends the other to prevent the fatal dart from striking the victim. One of these critics condemns this composition because mere bones are made to assume the functions of a living, active body, and the gentler sympathies of the spectator are painfully disturbed, first by the disagreeable and repulsive object intruded upon the attention, and next, by the confusion and mixture of fact with allegory. The other critic, while recording Roubiliac's "flamboyant" extravagance, still considers the Nightingale tomb as worthy of admiration for its expression and spirit.

This proves, to say the least, the unreliability of some of the prophets. As old and oftentimes reliable a critic as Pliny gives us a very curious observation on the statue of Paris, by Euphranor, in which he endeavors to discover three different characters: the dignity of a judge of the goddesses, the lover of Helen and the conqueror of Achilles. A statue in which one feignedly would unite stately dignity, youthful elegance, and stern valor must surely possess none of these to any eminent degree. In this case, however, the critic and not the artist is wrong.

This art is encouraged to-day with the least intelligence. Ten, twenty thousand dollars are paid for hideous performances of abnormal taste, while artistic creations of the sculptor's fancy oft go a-begging. Where meretricious Italian marbles and commercial French bronzes have the call, there are but few men, on account of scarcity of orders, who can devote themselves to an art which naturally requires considerable outlay for raw material and much time for the perfection of its creations.

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The appreciation of sculpture rests on an understanding of its principles and aims. We need only to turn to that wonderful disquisition, the "Laocoon" of Lessing, to see what profound and important questions are involved in the conception of a statue.

Sculpture is the imitative art par excellence. Whatever materials be used: clay, stucco, plaster, wax, terra cotta, wood, metals, bone, ivory, or marble, or whether the presentation is made by carving, modelling, casting, hammering, or chasing, the aim is to present any substance into a proposed form, "in the round" or "in relief," that is, with a solid background. The Greek poetical invention which ascribes the origin of the plastic art to the daughter of Dibutades, who traced the outline of her lover's profile, cast by shadow on the wall, which outline was afterwards filled in with clay by her father, is on the par of fancy with the oft-mentioned mythical Daedalus as the first and greatest exponent of early Greek sculpture. Heroism—

The people's prayer—the glad diviner's theme!  
The young men's vision, and the old men's dream!

—has been the birth of sculpture, when the desire existed to perpetuate great and noble achievements by lasting memorials.

The possibilities of the art are regulated by its special limitations. The perfection of its execution can only be found in the study of what remains from the past. Judgment on the work of the present can only be given in conformance to what the past teaches. What then of the past?

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Assyrian sculpture is the oldest on record. The finished execution of these works is evidence of the skilful practice of the workmen and affords proof of long experience. The few remains unearthed show a prescribed style and type and the infancy of the art. The Persian excavations revealed a step forward in the matter of drapery and an attempt to indicate movement in the image. The Egyptian pyramids, from over 2,000 years before our era, have as their characteristic extreme simplicity of design with great breadth of treatment to the exclusion of minute details, and a solid largeness of form. There is little or no variety of expression in the heads, especially of the superior personages, which all show a calm, impassioned, lofty bearing, with a benignant, placid smile. The action is limited by a most severe conventionalism. The little change found over long periods of time indicated the hierarchical control which was exercised over the art.

Etruscan sculpture presents considerable variety in the primitive examples which remain to us. Some forms are very simple and undefined, with the accessories of hair and drapery stiffly arranged in regular lines; others show exaggeration and affectation, especially in the hands, which are long and attenuated with the fingers turned back in an unnatural manner.

Greek sculpture expresses elevated sentiment, and illustrates noble subjects under appropriate forms of beauty. Before, sculpture had been simply mechanical and exclusively employed for monumental or religious objects. With the Greeks it became a fine art. Cicero tells how few handsome youth there were in Athens, so exclusive possession of beauty was not the cause of superior success in sculpture. It must be found in a gradual cultivation of the sensibility and appreciation of the beautiful in all its various aspects. Where formerly it was merely symbolical, the Greek regarded sculpture as an imitative art, and he studied nature for his model. Hence he did not portray violent passion, which is an accident not an essential of nature. Distortion of agony would have shocked his sensibilities. No Greek would have erred like Bernini did later, who carved a statue of David, just going to throw the stone from the sling, and in order to give him the expression of energy he had made him biting his underlip.

The development of the art was due to its universal appreciation, not being sustained merely by the opulent few but by all. The moral influence of the art was acknowledged to excite to actions of virtue and honor, and perpetuate the glory of the people, and artists seeing the honorable purposes to which their productions were destined, were emulous to deserve favor.

There were four periods in Greek sculpture. The first or archaic monuments of the Æginetan school reach to the sixth century before Christ. In these statues we find the proportions of the figure short, the waists remarkably contracted, the extremities large and heavy, the legs and feet in profile while the figures front; the hair is long and formal, falling over the shoulders, the face always laughing.

The second stage is found in the school of Phidias, reaching to 400 B.C. Here we find larger massing of the muscles and broad divisions of the parts. The value of an improved standard of form became recognized; although scarcely yet sufficiently truthful the statues approximated nearer to beauty and delicacy. There was greater care and perfection, although often hard and rigid with over-elaboration. In the *chryselephantine* (gold and ivory) Zeus of Phidias are found passionless majesty, largeness and grandeur in the masses and the very highest type of beauty in the forms.

The following two centuries comprise that period in which sculpture addressed itself more directly to the senses with more voluptuous execution. The aim was not so much to elevate and instruct as to please, whereby the art left its higher and nobler purpose. There was greater prominence given to exquisite manipulation. Praxiteles was the first to carve the nude. Lysippus was eminent in the finish of the hair, the smaller heads, the slender bodies, greater elegance. He it was of whom it was said: "Others show men as they are, he as they appeared to be." There was much attention paid to characteristic detail. In this period the first portrait statues are found.

The fourth and last period of Greek sculpture did not preserve the impress of genius, the seal of true and original impulse. The decline was manifest in mannerism instead of style, imitation or bad innovation. The Græco-Romans present an absence of ideal beauty, no refinement of selection, unconcentrated composition without grandeur of design in mass and breadth.

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Christian Sculpture commenced entirely *de novo* after the art had for centuries been in abeyance. It had a distinct aim, which was the cause of its growth and ultimate sterility: it was in the service of the Church. At first there was extreme rudeness and coarseness; later, beginning with the della Robbias, a beautiful feeling for simplicity in treatment is shown, with a pure and touching expression. The forms are often somewhat stiff and primitive, which subsequently improved in characteristic sentiment of the drapery in flowing lines, gracefully composed masses, picturesque arrangement with the subject clearly expressed. There is then a bold originality of design, accompanied, however, with a confusion of unimportant details and a desire to show executive dexterity. In the later development the error was made to transcend the limits of sculpture, which has only to do with form, by an endeavor to show perspective in remote, diminishing figures, and retiring scenery, as done by Ghiberti. Some of the mannerisms and affectation became apparent, as in Donatello's work showing the bendings of the wrists and the articulation of the bones. The most powerful genius of this period is Michael Angelo, whose work is not free from the fault of exaggeration, yet his broad and simple lines give solidity and force with vigorous invention. After the classicists decadence set in, as among the Greeks, by love of display, a desire to astonish by bold and skilful ingenuity and a preference for the mechanical above the nobler objects of the art. Fertile imagination, uncontrolled by submission to the necessary principles and limitations, gave a tendency to florid and insincere treatment. But few lights shine after the Reformation era. Roubiliac was prominent for his great skill and his absence of good taste, while Jean Goujon must not be forgotten. Canova, Flaxman, Thorwaldsen revived sculpture in this century. Houdon, Barye, and others have wrought well; and to-day — But we cannot enroll the living among the dead.

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If this historical survey be accompanied with a study of the works of all the ages, it will be possible to arrive at some fundamental principles which demonstrate what good sculpture is. It will be seen that the chief is simplicity. There must be absence of effort and obtrusive display of means. There must be vitality; not always the bland external aspect, the ephemeral, accidental surface action, but the inner and deeper truth of nature of the character portrayed.

But the greatest of all is simplicity.

This makes Houdon's "Voltaire," in the Comédie Française, or Rauch's "Frederick the Great," in Berlin, great works for their character expression. This makes French's "Death and the Sculptor," in the Forest Hill Cemetery in Boston, greater than the Florence Nightingale tomb, because it has deeper

spiritual meaning. This makes Macmonnies' "Army and Navy group," as most of his work, inferior, because of the confusion of detail and lack of sincerity, as dexterous ingenuity seems to be aimed at, with originality of thought lacking. And this again makes Rodin's Balzac, albeit a repetition of his previous work in the group of "Citizens of Calais," still marvelous, because of the soul which is hidden within these simple and strong lines.

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The *bête noire* of sculpture is the dress. Dress is secondary to the figure, and should be dealt with in subjection to the curves, muscles, etc., of the body. It must be generalized as much as possible, indicated rather than expressed. No stiff, flat collars, padded coats, bronze buttons, and buttonholes that one might button. The statue must be a human figure clothed, not a suit of clothes with a human figure within, a lay figure of the studio with the "property coat" buttoned on it. Even present-day conventional garments can be made unobtrusive by toning down, so that a cloak, however cut and differing in shape, becomes a flowing garment to wrap around the figure; a coat, a garment with sleeves and a collar, whether jacket or doublet; trousers, a casing for the legs. It is the genius of the sculptor to subdue these wraps to the inner soul.

An important adjunct to the statue, and regulating its effect, is the pedestal. This pedestal should intend to signify an elevated portion of the ground on which the person might have been standing in his lifetime, and not a means to perch him on some pillar, the acrobatic indication of which abates any idea of dignity and only becomes grotesque. Often in the latter case we find the pedestal entirely too meager and the space stunted, suggesting a very insecure position and precarious footing, requiring almost a living power of self-balancement. One cannot help but think of the irons shooting up inside the trousers and sunk deep into the granite to prevent the overtopping by some gust of wind. In many statues it may be noticed that one foot is made to project a little over the ledge, representing the ground, with the effect of a certain lightness and freedom.

An example of a poor foundation for the figure is Bartholdi's statue of Lafayette, in Union Square, which is modelled to attitudinize to an extent that is absurdly theatrical to anybody but a Frenchman. The figure is cleverly modelled, and displays an academic knowledge of composition and of arrangement of lines. The idea of Lafayette coming from over the sea to help in liberty's cause is too bluntly shown by his stepping from the prow of a boat. The prow of the boat on which he stands and the bronze waves that float the vessel are absurd; the boat is too small to hold him, and if it could hold him the bronze waves could never float it. Is this a rendition of character—Lafayette, the friend of liberty and of America, the soldier, the patriot? The line between the suggestive and the pictorial is overstepped.

## LOCH SHELDRAKE.

Sullivan County, N. Y.

Nestling 'gainst a rocky bosom,  
Maple-shaded, and with pine groves  
Is Loch Sheldrake, brightest pearl  
Of the Neversink and Shawangunk.\*  
Ruby tintling when the sun sets,  
Whitecap foaming when the stormwind  
Sweeps upon the placid waters;  
Keen and crisp the air enlivens—  
Beautyspot of Nature's graces,  
Fairrest of all resting places.

\* Pronounced: Shangunk.